



# HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

An electronic newsletter in support of public safety services in Montana  
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## IM Weekly Highlights

- Award letters for the Dunn Mt., Greenough, Colburn and Lost Creek sites have been sent for commissioner signatures.
- The first IM outreach meeting took place in Broadwater County on Tues., Aug. 4. Participants included Commissioners Elaine Graveley and Laura Obert along with Sheriff Brenda Ludwig and Under Sheriff Ben Knaff.
- Brian Sewell continues to coordinate with the National Guard and site facility managers to update site-users agreements for the deployment of National Guard last-mile hops.
- Harris-Stratex has completed most of the work on the west end of the Northern Tier microwave system. They are still working on correcting issues on the east side.
- Fleet mapping training in Great Falls on Aug. 4 and 5 was well received. More in next week's HAM.

## DOC Achieves Major Milestones

By Garrett Fawaz [gawaz@mt.gov](mailto:gawaz@mt.gov) and E. Wing Spooner [espooner@mt.gov](mailto:espooner@mt.gov)

The switch to digital communications within the Department of Corrections (DOC) is now in the full "ON" mode. For the Montana State Prison, this occurred June 24, when the entire facility transitioned from its old analog radio system to its new, state-of-the-art Motorola digital system. The Montana Women's Prison, Riverside Youth Correctional Facility and Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility transferred to digital radios earlier this year. For adult probation and parole, central office administrators and the parole staff within the Youth Services Division, this transition process will be completed over the next several weeks.



DOC Staff Sgt. Gary Hansen, Montana State Prison Command Center  
(Photo by Christopher Lamb)

These milestones represent the first time Montana's correctional operations have an integrated, real-time, push-to-talk, secure, communications capability readily available within their vehicles and on their persons.

Within the probation and parole officers' vehicles, a Global Positioning System (GPS) has been

integrated into mobile radios. When the statewide interoperable trunking system becomes fully operational, this feature will permit real-time tracking of where each and every vehicle is located. This capability will significantly enhance officer safety and situational awareness for officers and department leadership.

With a \$2.6 million one-time appropriation from the 2007 Legislature for replacement of existing radio and communications infrastructure, the DOC has completed the full deployment of its digital radio enterprise system throughout the agency. The department's system is not a stand-alone one, but is an integrated part of the entire Interoperable Montana (IM) project. The IM project, when completed, will provide the state with a public safety communications system connected through a high-capacity, protected, digital microwave network.

This has been a multiyear-long project management process involving not only department employees and organizations, but many other government agencies in every county, the IM project team, Motorola Inc., Northrop Grumman and numerous Motorola certified communication companies. Thanks are extended to department staff, which has exhibited truly outstanding and tireless work in support of this effort. DOC greatly appreciates their professionalism and is pleased that they were able to maintain fiscal responsibility to the citizens of Montana.

## PSAP Managers Hold Innovative Get Together

By E. Wing Spooner [espooner@mt.gov](mailto:espooner@mt.gov)

On July 15, Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) managers from Gallatin, Madison, Park and Sweet Grass Counties as well as Yellowstone National Park, met in Livingston for the first time to discuss mutual concerns and troubleshooting strategies.

After a road construction crew in Bozeman damaged a Qwest fiber optic line earlier this spring, PSAPs in the region experienced a variety of outages. Participants analyzed processes for routing 9-1-1 calls during outages and discussed the need for contingency plans and policies. Members intend to share dispatch Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with each other. Future discussion will focus on dispatcher retention and recruitment, because this is a shared concern.

The next meeting will be on Oct. 6 at 10:00 am in Yellowstone National Park (YNP). Participants will need to notify Kaelyn Johnson at (307) 344-2130 that they are attending, so they are not charged an entrance fee.

### Big Sky 11 Members Set Deadline for Radio Inventories

By E. Wing Spooner [espooner@mt.gov](mailto:espooner@mt.gov)

During the July 23 Big Sky 11 consortium meeting in Billings, Mike Linder, Big Sky 11 Technical Committee Chair, emphasized that all radio inventories need to be completed by July 31. In addition coverage data on the Hathaway Site was presented. Members also learned that NEPAs for the Shane Ridge, Dunn Mt., Colburn and Greenough sites have been approved. Plans are to complete work before the snow flies. Noelle Pinkerton, Treasure County, suggested holding a meeting with landowners for the Hysham Hills site as well as with her County Commissioners. Several individuals volunteered to assist with this meeting.

Project Director Floyd Fisher reported on the last IMPD meeting and reiterated the need to send a letter of support for an IM appropriation to Senator Jon Tester. Members discussed an access issue at one of the consortium's sites, which crosses DNRC land. Lisa Solf, Big Sky 11 Secretary, said that the revised bylaws still need two jurisdiction signatures, and Ed Aufer will assist in obtaining these.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thurs., August 27 at the Billings Police Department Training Center, 4810 Midland Road. The technical meeting will begin at 8:30 am, while the consortium will meet at 10:00 am. A conference call number will be publicized ahead of time for those unable to attend the meeting.

### SOP Workshops Draw Diverse Groups

By Ian Marquand [marquand.im@gmail.com](mailto:marquand.im@gmail.com)

In the alphabet soup that public safety communications can be, few abbreviations are as critical as SOP and MOU, which stand for "Standard Operating Procedures" and "Memorandum of Understanding."

City, county, tribal, state and federal representatives learned more about the importance of those documents at two "SOP Workshops," one held in Helena on July 28 and one in Billings on July 29. John Powell of the federal Office of Emergency Communications joined with Robert Sedita, formerly of the L.A. County Sheriff's Office, to present blueprints for written SOPs and MOUs. Interoperability Montana's Kevin Bruski and Roger Smith also provided additional information.

Public safety officials representing 18 different counties, as well as the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Nation, municipalities, several Department of Corrections facilities and other state agencies attended the training. Several federal agencies also participated, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service.

Sedita emphasized the importance of MOUs to

define the responsibilities of each party sharing an interoperable communications system. Those responsibilities include licensing, maintenance, making changes to the system and correcting problems.

Powell discussed the importance of having written SOPs that govern both day-to-day and incident responses, from both an operational and a technical perspective. He noted, for instance, that SOPs should make clear whether users should employ codes or plain language in describing situations over the air and, if using a phonetic alphabet, which specific words will represent individual letters. Attendees then broke into groups to identify elements that would be important to include in their own SOPs or MOUs. They also were asked to consider which entities might need to be included in those documents.

Scott Bradford, Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB), also presented an overview of the state's Mutual Aid and Common Frequencies handbook. Bradford noted that plans are to review and revise the handbook. He also said the PSSB would like to offer more training on the use of mutual aid frequencies.

Powell noted that creating working MOUs and SOPs is hard work, but said public safety entities will find the results worthwhile in the long run.

### Upcoming Meetings

#### Aug. 10

IM Finance Committee

Helena • 9:00 am - Noon

Anderson ZurMuehlen, 828 Great Northern Blvd.

#### Aug. 10

IM Governance Committee

Helena • 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Anderson ZurMuehlen, 828 Great Northern Blvd.

#### Aug. 11

IM Project Directors (IMPD) Meeting

Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

MACo Large Conference Rm., Lower Level, 2715 Skyway Drive

#### Aug. 12 - Please Note: This meeting has been cancelled

Central Montana Consortium (CMICC)

#### Aug. 12

South Central Montana Consortium (SCMICC)

Bozeman • 10:00 am

Jury Rm. B, Third Floor, Law & Justice Center, 615 South 16<sup>th</sup> St.

### Outreach Meetings

Aug. 17 – Dillon • 3:00 pm

Beaverhead County Search & Rescue Bldg.

MT Hwy 41

Aug. 18 – Columbus • am (Tentative)

Bozeman • pm (Tentative)

Anaconda • 7:00 pm • County Courthouse

Commission Chamber, 800 S. Main

Aug. 19 – Butte-Silver Bow • 2:00 pm

Location to be Announced

Butte-Silver Bow • 7:30 pm • County Courthouse

Council Chamber, 155 W. Granite St.

#### Aug. 20

I-15/90 Consortium

Butte • 10:00 am

Butte-Silver Bow Chamber, 1000 George St.